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ABSTRACT

With "adventure-based" learning, instructors present activities in a way that allows the group to develop its own abilities, with guidance from the instructor when appropriate. Adventure-based learning activities (which emphasize the importance of play) lend themselves to inclusion in the basic speech communication course, particularly when teaching concepts associated with public speaking and interpersonal communication. A "hog call" exercise acts as a vehicle to allow students to get to know one another better. The "It Ain't Me Babe" exercise is a non-verbal way for students to get to know one another. In the "Warp Speed" exercise, students work together toward a common goal. The "Mine Field" exercise is an effective activity to demonstrate the importance of listening. (RS)

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# ADVENTURE-BASED LEARNING ACROSS DOMAINS

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## ADVENTURE-BASED LEARNING ACROSS DOMAINS

Plato was quoted as saying, "You can learn more about an individual during an hour of play than in a year of conversation." Martin Buber said that "Play is exultation of the possible." Adventure-based learning espouses this philosophy of the importance of play, contending that people are happier and more productive when they have a playful, creative attitude.

In traditional models of teaching, the instructor is seen as the definitive source of information. In this paradigm, the student assumes a passive role, and isn't actively involved in the educational process. With Adventure-based learning, the opposite is true. Instructors present activities in a way that allows the group to develop its own abilities, with guidance from the instructor when appropriate.

Two of the basic concepts associated with Adventure-based learning are the Full Value Contract and challenge by choice. In the Full Value Contract, participants agree to care for each other, participate fully in the activity, and work toward group goals. They also agree to have fun in the process! Challenge by choice is a philosophy that allows participants to "opt out" of an activity if they desire. If students decide not to participate (it hasn't happened to me...yet!), they can be used as process observers for the activity. (As a side note, if it was me, I would remind them of the Full Value Contract and their commitment to group goals)!

With this background information in mind, there are many Adventure-based learning activities that lend themselves to inclusion in the basic course. This handout will explain four of them that can be utilized when teaching concepts associated with basic course content, specifically public speaking and interpersonal communication. All of the activities are adapted from the book, *Quicksilver*, by Karl Rohnke and Steve Butler, founders of Project Adventure, Inc.

**HOG CALL**

This exercise acts as a vehicle to allow students to get to know one another better. It is particularly effective at the beginning of a term when students are getting acquainted. Students pair up with someone they do not know. You can facilitate this by having them form a straight line, and then winding around the room, with students following you, so that eventually, the students are in two lines facing each other. After the pairs are formed, each pair comes up with a "twosome" name to describe them. Each one takes on half the name. Here are some examples!

| | |
|---|---|
| Love and Marriage | Salt and Pepper |
| Pride and Joy | Hootie and the Blowfish |
| Bagels and Cream Cheese | Regis and Kathy Lee |

You get the idea. After each pair has determined which person is which, the first person in each pair turns their back on the other partners while they scatter at the opposite side of the room. Then, those people turn their backs while their partners do the same scattering technique. The idea is to get as far away from your partner as possible.

Have the students close their eyes, and turn toward the center of the room. (Oh, make sure you clear the room of desks and such...don't want to have bruised students)! Then, when you give the word, everyone, all at one, tries to find their partner by calling their name. That is the only communication they can have. Tell students to be sure to keep their eyes closed and keep their "bumpers up!" (Arms bent up in front of your chest with palms facing out). Every student is calling the name of their partner at the same time. (The exercise is especially loud when done by 50 or more at the same time, so you may want to stay clear of the library)! When they find their partner, they are to just stand where they are and wait for the rest of the partners to find each other.

After the pairs are back together, the paired participants ask each other questions in anticipation of introducing them to the entire group. For the basic course, focus could be on the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| Public Speaking: | Information for introductory speech |
| Interpersonal: | Self disclosure |

Sample Questions for Hog Call interviews:

1. What is the most fun you have ever had?

2. What is your greatest personal achievement?

3. What possession do you prize the most?

4. If you were to print something on a T-shirt, what would it say?

5. If you discovered that you had six months of healthy living left before a rapid demise, what would you do differently?

6. What books would you like to have if you were alone on a desert island (all your survival needs are met)?

7. What is the most embarrassing thing that has happened to you?

**WARP SPEED**

This activity gets your students working together toward a common goal. It also requires problem-solving abilities. Arrange the students in a circle and begin by explaining that each person is going to receive the ball* (catch it) and then toss it to someone else (who hasn't previously caught it), with the last person to receive it returning it to the person who started the cycle. Be sure to tell the students that they must remember who throws it to them and to whom they throw it. If everyone remembers correctly, you have established a pattern where each person catches the ball from one person and tosses it to another.

Once the pattern is established (practice it a few times so students remember where the ball goes), present the *Warp Speed* initiative. The challenge is to see how fast the group can move the ball through the pattern from start to finish with these rules in force.

**Rules:**

1. The object must start and stop with the same person (whoever starts it must get it back to complete the activity).
2. The object must move sequentially from person to person (not everyone can touch it at the same time).
3. Everyone must have "possession" of the object as it moves through the pattern.

Time the group's efforts to track improvement. See how fast they can do the task. (When I first did this, I think our record was 1.8 seconds, down from about 25 as I recall)!

Public Speaking: Warp speed can be used a few different ways in a public speaking class. It can be used to introduce the notion of narrowing the topic to say what you need to say as efficiently as possible without taking a lot of time with unnecessary details. You can use the analogy that with the object, we still got through the same amount of people, we just did it in an expedient manner. Likewise, with developing a topic, we may have researched a lot of information, and we just need to get through that information in an expedient way. I also point out that it took a number of different attempts to figure out the best way to get the fastest time. In speechmaking, it will take a lot of practice rehearsing the speech to determine the best way to be most effective, and get the best grade possible. (A side benefit to this is that it builds a sense of supportiveness within small groups in the classroom because they are working together toward a common goal, so it may ease speaking anxiety when students give their speeches in front of the class because they know they have a supportive audience).

Interpersonal: Warp speed can be used to talk about a number of topics in interpersonal communication. It can be used to talk about small group discussion, and decision-making in groups, with the notion that for the most part (provided the group doesn't become a victim of "groupthink") small groups are able to utilize the resources within the group to come up with better decisions that they might have individually. It can also be used in talking about perceptions and being willing to see things from alternative perspectives. In doing this activity, students have to change their paradigms in order to get a faster time. Often, with communication, in order to be more effective, they need to take a step back and realize that there may be other ways of doing things.

*When choosing a ball or other object to pass around the group, choose one that is soft and won't hurt people. "Koosh" balls are excellent as are small stuffed animals or other soft items.

**IT AIN'T ME BABE**

People are either open or tight about relating personal information to strangers. This activity may raise some anxieties, but it also can be very funny! Instead of your typical get-to-know-each-other verbal introduction, try this non-verbal interaction.

Ask students to randomly pick a partner. (You can also line them up in the same manner as hog call, and do a variation of the interview process used in Hog Call). Give each pair 5-10 minutes together to introduce themselves to each other. They may not speak to one another during this time. Writing is also not allowed. As a compassionate gesture, allow paper and pen for drawing only (but it probably isn't needed).

Students need to communicate whatever they feel is important about themselves to their partners. They can gesticulate, mime, jump around, use facial contortions, the works! They just can't talk! At the end, students report out to the class what they learned about their partners. What adds some fun to the descriptions is to have each partner verbalize what they learned, and then allow a brief time for rebuttal and/or corrections from the person just described to insure accuracy of the introductions.

Public Speaking: Use for introductory speeches. After the students have a fairly accurate perception of their partners (interests, roles, likes, dislikes, hobbies, major, age, and the like), then have each set of partners introduce each other to the rest of the class. Yes, they have to speak for this part!

Interpersonal: Use for nonverbal communication. After the activity, draw parallels between the information they received about their partners, and how they arrived at those conclusions. If they have interpreted messages inaccurately, how do they account for that? This is a good activity to show that while nonverbal communication is loaded with meaning, our interpretations of that meaning may or may not be accurate.

**MINE FIELD**

Mine field is a good activity to demonstrate the importance of listening. It takes a bit of planning if you rely solely on your own resources, but you can have the students help out and it isn't quite so difficult. First, you need to get a number of items (I'd suggest 30-50) that aren't sharp, or that could hurt someone if they hit them with their foot or fell on them. These items are evenly distributed within an outlined rectangular area. Have students pair up, and stand on opposite ends of the rectangle, and try to lead one another through the mine field. One of the members of the pair is blindfolded (or has their eyes closed) and the other is simply giving verbal directions (no touch!).

If you want to have the students help out, assign each student to bring two items to class that fit the above requirements (soft, able to be stepped on...you know, safe for 3 years old and under!) Also, rather than you as the instructor setting up the mine field, have the students make something within the rectangle using all the object they brought - sort of a class canvas of art. You add to the art piece as you see necessary to make the mine field segment more challenging. Then, blindfold one partner, and have the other try to guide them through the mine field. The difficult part of this is that there are 6-8 people trying to be guided through the mine field at the same time. So, listening becomes essential, and precision of verbal communication is essential!

Public Speaking: In public speaking, this exercise can be used to show the importance of critical listening during speeches. There are a lot of distractions in the activity that can be linked to distractions during speeches. You can also talk about things the speaker can do to foster better listening habits from the audience. End with the class generating a list of things they can do to be better listeners when their classmates are speaking.

Interpersonal: In an interpersonal class, you can focus on listening as well. You can also use this activity to demonstrate the transactional model of communication. The first time through, let only one partner talk, with no questions or clarifications being asked by the blindfolded partner. Then, the next time through, let them talk to one another so the blindfolded person can ask for clarification. Afterwards, talk about the differences between the two experiences, and how the second one is more indicative of what happens in the transactional model of communication when there is simultaneous sending and receiving of messages. You can also bring in the concepts of external noise, and semantic noise (based on the verbal directions of the partners), channels, context, and so forth.

All activities adapted from:

Rohnke, K. and Butler, S. (1995). *Quicksilver*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.